9-2007

Nursing Faculty Leading from the Bottom: Implementing Service Learning through the Governance Structure

Paula K. Reams  
University of Dayton, Paula128@earthlink.net

Darla J. Twale  
University of Dayton, darla.twale@notes.udayton.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/jwel
Nursing Faculty Leading from the Bottom: Implementing Service Learning through the Governance Structure

Paula K. Reams and Darla J. Twale

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which organizational infrastructure and institutional leadership facilitated or hindered institutionalizing service learning as pedagogy at a small health professions college. Through interviews and content and discourse analysis, we found that data supported the notion that service learning “fit” the mission, however, data also revealed some resistance to using service learning on the part of some faculty members and administrators. Consequently, governance and communication channels appeared as barriers to institutionalization because the administration’s words and deeds were incongruent. Nursing faculty’s espoused values and actual behaviors were congruent thus forcing them to lead for change from the bottom of their College hierarchy.

Increased research on service learning as pedagogy can be found in the literature (Elyer & Giles, 1999; Furco, 2001; Giles & Elyer, 1998; Weglarz & Seybert, 2004). Service learning as pedagogy advocates for a combination of higher education curricula partnerships with community agencies by providing community services while creating learning centered, reflective environments for students. This pedagogical approach is particularly suited to nursing and to social work professions, typically female-dominated fields where much of service learning research was conducted (Hamner, Wilder, Avery, & Byrd, 2002). Gilligan (1982) realized that women often make decisions based on their connection with others. Gelmon, Holland, and Shinnammon (1998) found that sustainability for service learning in curriculum was a direct relationship between faculty and community partners, not surprising given the natural interaction between health care providers and the community. The researchers also noticed that when service learning in curriculum thrived, a relationship existedbetween faculty involvement, academic leadership, and institutional commitment.

While service learning promotes that connection between academe and community, the implementation of such programs in higher educational institutions is affected by institutional mission, college governance and in-
About the Authors

Paula Reams received her Ph.D. from the University of Dayton and is currently a professor and Chair of Health Professions at Kettering College of Medical Arts. She is a Nurse, a certified nurse educator, and a licensed massage therapist. Her research interests include service learning, leadership and learner-centered education. Email: Paula128@earthlink.net.

Darla Twale is a professor of higher education administration at the University of Dayton but currently on leave to facilitate a hybrid online doctoral program at the Union Institute and University in Cincinnati. Her areas of interest include graduate student socialization and faculty incivility. Email: darla.twale@notes.udayton.edu or darla.twale@tui.edu.

Literature Review

Attention to community needs and community service began with the pioneering work of Jane Addams at Hull House in the late 19th century and continued with John Dewey who saw service as a teachable moment (Dewey, 1908/1978; Morton & Saltman, 1997). Their spirit was later manifested in the work of Dorothy Day (1952/1981), who also saw service as an answer to the problems of the greater community. Service learning established itself in higher education on many college campuses in the late 1960s and early 1970s as an ideal place to combine learning with service. These movements became popularized as the Peace Corps, VISTA, White House Fellows, Urban Corps, and Action Agency (Stanton, Giles, & Cruz, 1999). Limited literature exists, however, addressing service learning as pedagogy and its effect on higher education institutions, (Bringle & Hatcher,
Nursing Faculty Leading from the Bottom

2000; Gray, Ondaatje, Fricker, & Geschwind, 2000; Kramer, 2000; Ward, 1996). More recent articles, directed toward higher education administration, identify conditions and strategies needed for institutionalization of service learning (Furco & Holland, 2004) or roles and responsibilities of academic administrators (Driscoll & Sandmann, 2004; Ramaley, 2000). Researchers agree that institutionalization of service learning as pedagogy is achieved when it becomes an on-going, valued, expected, and legitimate part of the institution’s organizational and intellectual core.

Holland (1997) and Furco and Holland (2004) emphasized the importance of higher educational leadership as foundational to service learning implementation. They stated that for service learning to become pedagogy, it must permeate the mission, organizational components, and academic objectives of the institution. The design, implementation, and sustainability of service learning programs are most often shaped by institutional interpretations of college mission, culture, governance, history, public image, financial condition, student traits, and the environment in which the institution resides (Abes, Jackson, & Jones, 2002; Gelmon, Holland, Driscoll, Spring, & Kerrigan, 2001, Rubin, 1996). Many of these components lie under the purview of institutional administrators who have the authority to move service learning from the margins to the mainstream. Higher educational leadership is needed to institutionalize service learning. Different leadership strategies may be needed to incorporate service learning within higher educational institutions as well as its connection to the community. In many cases administrators must view the implementation of service learning into the curricula as planned change or as Lewin (1947, 1951) described, “cognitive redefinition,” looking at the situation with a new perspective.

Even if institutions have cooperative faculty and administrators who support service learning as pedagogy, implementation may still be problematic if faculty has reservations (Strage, 2004). These reservations include practical difficulties in implementing programs, lack of support from the institution, and/or lack of recognition in relation to tenure, promotion, and scholarship (Bringle, Hatcher, & Games, 1997; Driscoll, Holland, Gelmon, and Kerrigan, 1996; Hesser, 1998; Ward, 1996).

Using the case study method, (Ward, 1996) found that institutions with centralized decision-making and shared governance were more likely to institutionalize service learning than dissimilar institutional structures. Barriers to faculty participation included exclusion of faculty from initial conversations about service learning and faculty perceiving service learning as an administrative initiative. Holland (1997) deducted that when institutional leaders showed congruence between their understanding of the mission of service and their action with regard to service, institutionalization of service learning was more likely.

This study posed the following question: How do infrastructure, administrative leadership, and faculty facilitate or hinder the incorporation of service learning as pedagogy in a health professions college?
Research Methodology

Setting
We conducted this study at a small, faith-based health professions college located in the Midwest. With 52 full time faculty and 650 to 750 students, the college offers programs in nursing, physician assistant, radiology, respiratory therapy, sonography, and human biology. The 14-member nursing division offers associate and bachelor's completion degrees. With seven faculty members, the physician assistant program offers the certificate and master's programs. The other departments have three faculty members per program and offer associate and/or bachelor's degrees. Fifteen faculty members constitute the Division of Arts and Sciences. The college's organizational structure is hierarchical with a president, an academic dean, and a student services dean. Faculty members are employed on year-to-year renewable teaching contracts. The college attracts both traditional and nontraditional students, slightly more females than males, some minority and international students, and a few students affiliated with the college’s founding denomination.

Findings

Research Design
To study the service learning component at this small-sized college, we chose the case study method. We conducted a holistic study using mixed methods to gather and analyze information that was both first hand and artifactual (Hays, 2004; Merriam, 1988). This intensive description and interpretation helped us to illuminate and understand the institutional status of service learning. This paper focused on the faculty and administrative interviews, the document content and discourse analyses used in the case study. The study examined people, issues, programs, and topics related to the implementation of service learning as pedagogy. To increase objectivity, the primary researcher spent time at the college, collecting data and checking her perceptions against what the data revealed.

Document Content Analysis and Discourse Analysis
Our case study began with the content and discourse analysis of the following: department, curriculum committee, and senate meeting minutes; course syllabi and honors program materials; assessment, evaluation, and accreditation self-study documents; the website, faculty handbook, and college bulletin; budget narratives, requests, and allocations. The analysis was augmented with faculty and administrative interviews. Each document was analyzed for the presence of “service” or “service learning.” The categories and codes of the documents were compared and relationships established (Dey, 1993). When the presence of service or service learning was noted in a document, discourse analysis was performed to analyze the con-
tent, theme, tenor, structure, and assumption of the underlying message (Mills, 1997). We discovered the issues of importance to faculty and committees, the time invested in the issues, what was chronicled about the issues, and what, if any, tone or intent could be detected in their words (Love, 2003).

These publicly archived documents (2000–2005), taken from the College Learning Resource Center, were tallied into two types of matrices. The first matrix categorized the number of times service learning was mentioned in each primary or secondary document so as to establish the existence and frequency of the concept. The second matrix indicated how service learning was mentioned and discussed in the document’s context. This dual technique enabled us to study the institutionalization of service learning as pedagogy in the college. Because much of human activity is not directly observable, measurable or amenable to firsthand experience, these methods allowed us to not only study behavior indirectly but also triangulate the data (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000; Glesner, 1999; Love, 2003).

**Semi-structured Interviews**

The primary researcher invited all full-time faculty and administrators to participate in the interview process. Ten faculty and three administrators agreed to participate individually in 15–30 minute, tape recorded, semi-structured interviews. She asked interviewees the same questions on perceptions of and experiences with service learning, that is, if participants believed that college infrastructures, practices, and/or policies facilitated or hindered incorporation of service learning as pedagogy. Interviewees discussed their goals, beliefs, attitudes, and values related to service learning. They responded to how they felt about the fit of service learning with the mission, benefits to using service learning, thoughts on incorporating more service learning into the curricula, and service learning as a core college experience. Participants also shared their thoughts on what support was needed for service learning to become a usable pedagogical technique in the curricula (Patton, 1990).

Following the interviews, the primary researcher read the transcripts; assigned codes to the data based on identifiable concepts, categorized data into major codes, and labeled them as themes (Glesner, 1999). Interviewees reviewed the transcripts for clarification as well as data checking (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000). Data from the interviews were compared to the data from the discourse analysis to assure credibility and dependability of the information gathered. Using multiple methods to triangulate helped counteract threats to validity (Glesner, 1999).

**Results**

Because the governance structure of the college is hierarchical, we placed the primary documents derived from campus committees in a similar hierarchy. (See Figure 1) Secondary documents derived from special or ad hoc
committees, however, did not fit this pattern. Solid lines show which committees report to each other and dotted lines indicate that communication between committees could occur but was not required. In the review of 766 documents, the words service or service learning appeared 1,142 times.

**Content Analysis**
Service learning was mentioned infrequently by the Mission Committee and the College Budget Committee. Administrative Council and General Assembly documents also had a low number of times service learning was mentioned (7 times in 28; 2 times in 8 respectively). College Senate minutes mentioned service learning 28 times in 50 documents. By contrast, in the 116 Nursing Faculty and Nursing Curriculum Committee documents, service or service learning was mentioned 85 times. This compared to the College Curriculum Committee minutes which showed service learning was mentioned 67 times in 95 documents. The Assessment Committee which develops practices and policies related to outcomes assessment mentioned service learning 38 times in 42 documents. These two committees have equal status in the governance hierarchy and both report to the College Senate. Created by the Academic Dean, the Service Learning Honors Program Task Force (SLHP) which sits at the bottom of the hierarchy generated 30 documents and mentioned service learning 195 times.

Faculty generated documents including syllabi, division course reports, and handbooks were examined. The SLHP syllabi mentioned service learning 101 times in 14 documents. Nursing syllabi and course reports cited service learning 217 times in 66 documents. The small respiratory therapy program stated service or service learning in its syllabi 51 times in 24 documents. Even with faculty representation on the SLHP Task Force, the physician assistant program syllabi cataloged service learning only 15 times in 65 documents.

Secondary documents were few in number but lengthy (37 to 290 pages); service learning was mentioned between 8 and 49 times in the self-study documents. The regional accreditation self-study document mentioned service 8 times in the context of college mission but did not address service learning. However, the specialized accreditation body for the nursing self study referred to service learning 49 times in a 290 page document. As found in the College Senate and Nursing Faculty minutes, accreditation agencies approved of the alignment of the mission with the competencies, teaching methods, course objectives, and outcomes, all of which included service. As illustrated in Figure 1, impetus for service learning as pedagogy occurred from the bottom of the organizational hierarchy with decreasing emphasis as the topic discussion flowed upward.

**Discourse Analysis**
Document discourse analysis revealed irregularities in programming support for service learning as pedagogy. The 2004–2005 College Bulletin stated “administration supports service, as does the mission of the college”
College administrators verbalized support of service and service learning because it fulfilled the College’s mission with confirmation in College Senate and College Curriculum minutes. The Code of Academic Integrity found in the *College Bulletin* includes “service to others.” The Spiritual Master Plan discussed in Administrative Council and College Senate meetings mentioned, “establishing programming for student service and learning,” as did the strategic goals found in the January 2000, Administrative Council minutes. This document also noted that Christian curricula must include “integration of faith and service to others,” a goal for the institution in the next five years. Subsequently mentioned in the *College Bulletin*, the Service Competency was evaluated by a nursing faculty member who served on the Assessment Committee. The March 2002 College Senate and July 2002 College Curriculum meeting minutes discussed the College signature course, *Introduction to College*, which explains service and service learning to new students.

As per the January 2000 College Senate meeting minutes, faculty were encouraged to write for mini grants to incorporate service learning into the curricula. Three nursing faculty wrote for and received three separate grants. During a March 2000 meeting of the College Senate, two division chairs proposed integrating service learning into the college curricula. In the September 2002 College Senate and the December 2001 Assessment Committee minutes, evidence was found that faculty suggested, supported, and unanimously voted to have service as one of the core college competencies. A paper trail of service and service learning was recorded in multiple official college documents.

Despite more than two years of College Senate minutes, College Curriculum minutes, and Nursing Faculty minutes, administrators and division chairs verbalized support for those faculties who incorporated service learning into their curricula, but little funding, rewards, or workload reduction was offered. Limited funding appeared in the college budget for marketing a service learning program to students or faculty, or for underwriting students and faculty involved in service learning programs should they come to fruition. Discussion during the SLHP meetings included incorporating this task force into the standing committees of the college governance structure. It was revealed in the meeting minutes that several faculty members who volunteered to serve on the SLHP Task Force asked administration to take into consideration their work on the task force as part of their workload and to be relieved from obligations to other campus committees. However, the request was not approved by the administration.

Although service learning has been deemed a part of the curriculum, its integration had not been consistently applied throughout the college. SLHP Task Force meeting minutes disclosed that one faculty member wrote for and received a fellowship for the fledgling SLHP, which assisted with funding the program, and allowed two nursing faculty to attend and present at a conference on service learning. In 2002, the SLHP minutes and the Nursing Faculty meeting minutes noted that staff did not appear to un-
understand the processes and work related to service learning. SLHP 2004, Nursing Faculty and Curriculum minutes and course report documents indicated that marketing monies or professional development funds had not been forthcoming nor was time allotted on the academic calendar for service projects or professional development. A discussion in a College Curriculum committee meeting revealed also that, “faculty didn’t have enough knowledge about how to incorporate it into the curriculum.” No follow through was found in the documents related to the proposal in the College Senate from the Nursing and Physician Assistant faculties to integrate service learning into the curricula.

According to the 2003–2004 College Curriculum minutes, service or service learning competencies were inconsistently found in course objectives, teaching methods, or outcomes. According to the 2004 Assessment Committee and College Committee minutes, evaluation of the service competency was found in only a few courses including all SLHP courses and two nursing courses. Formal education or faculty development to address service learning was infrequent (2002–2004 College Senate, College Curriculum, Nursing Faculty minutes).

Semi-structured Interviews

Administrative Perspectives
In 2005 semi-structured, individual interviews were conducted with 3 administrators and 10 faculty members during a three-week period. Every person interviewed believed that service learning supported the college mission. Although most believed service learning should be integrated into courses, few felt it should become a core learning experience. An administrator responded,

Service learning is an approach I would hope would be increasingly a part of what all programs do. The reason I hedge . . . is that I believe faculty and students need to catch the enthusiasm of experiences with those courses that have largely been using service learning . . . I fully believe it will happen best if people, as I think it is already happening, say this is really good, we need to do more.

Two administrators expressed a lack of understanding of service learning, but requested help in developing a knowledge base because it is congruent with the college mission. One administrator revealed, “I think it would be helpful to me to understand better what is happening to service learning across the college to see where there are opportunities, problems.”

However, support for incorporating service learning into a course varied between administrators and faculty members. Another administrator offered, “Administrators can have a huge effect on the sort of emotional element of their approach in the classroom. [We] can do that by constant reminders of the value of service learning and by encouragement.” The third administrator added that, “Saying rah, rah, which is what I do is a genuine help for some.” One administrator recognized that, “coordinating ser-
vice learning was a ‘big job’ and more than one person should be coordinating it.”

Although each administrator acknowledged that service learning was yet to be part of the campus culture, one added that,

What needs to be in place is leadership on the academic side that gives service learning a very substantial priority. . . . It seems to me that for a teacher to put that kind of effort into the development of coursework, there has to be leadership on the academic side and on the side of the president that gives priority to that kind of thing. We will become service learning oriented to the degree that the leadership of the institution takes it seriously.

**Faculty Perspectives**

Among faculty, 42% had never used service learning in their courses, while 20% had been using it in their courses for more than four years. Only 4 instructors reported having formal training in the use of service learning but 19 instructors indicated they had some informal training. One faculty member encouraged more inquiry into service learning and its uses through college program practices of the already visible SLHP. Among those concerned with incorporating service learning into the curriculum were those fretful for “board pass rates.” In fact, one administrator worried that, “. . . we have to develop ways to use [service learning] that don’t compromise our students’ capacity in professional examinations.”

The nursing division appeared to be discussing service learning more than other divisions. In 2004, nursing faculty voted during a Nursing Curriculum meeting to incorporate service learning into the revised associate degree nursing program. They purposely aligned the division’s philosophy to be consistent with the mission of the college as reiterated in the accreditation self study. Service learning projects were found in nursing course syllabi measured through clinical evaluation. A nursing faculty member stated, it “. . . is hard to separate personal and professional [growth] in this case because ramifications of student learning with these types of projects intertwines.”

Another nursing faculty member opined, “Service learning is a valued pedagogy and one that works well if you want to look at a learning-centered environment which I am very much interested in and in the direction the college is moving.” That same sentiment was echoed by one of the administrators: “Service learning is a wonderful match between the theory of service learning and the theory of learning-centered education.”

Despite positive comments, participants expressed concerns such as risk management issues; collaboration with colleagues and coordination with outside service partners; support and resource management; and how to implement, assess, and evaluate service learning. A nursing faculty member concerned about collaboration with colleagues aired her concerns: “[Administration] could foster more of the collaboration effort between the departments in order to implement service learning . . . it would lend itself
very, very well to collaborative inter-disciplinary work.” She noted faculty needed “time set aside once a week . . . to get together to discuss [service learning].” One nursing faculty person lamented that coordination was a problem: “Sometimes we mix too many things together under one committee, pieces get lost;” while another expressed she “. . . would need to know resources, or who[sic] to contact.” An Arts and Sciences instructor wondered “. . . how to ensure that the learning is taking place” when we add the service component coupled with the need for an administrator to coordinate it. As for administrative support, a nursing faculty member asked for “. . . recognition as part of the workload.” She added that, “. . . administrators need to have a greater understanding of what kind of work is involved when you choose that type of pedagogy within a course.” Another faculty member stressed that it is the administration’s job to lead the college in accepting service learning as part of the culture. She noted, “It takes time to understand the concept and appreciate the concept and apply it to what you are doing.”

**Discussion**

**College Mission**

All data supported the notion that service learning “fit” the mission of this faith-based college as preliminary to implementation (Fink, 2003; Weimer, 2002). Driscoll et al, (1996) observed faculty change from traditional teaching approaches to learner-centered approaches when service learning is used. As the institution attempts to move in this direction, service learning as pedagogy has the potential to facilitate a learner-centered environment. It provides real life experiences to students, which can give students tools for their future work in a health profession (Gelmon, Holland, and Shinnammon, 1998; Hamner, Wilder, Avery & Byrd, 2002). The data revealed that most faculty members felt service learning developed their own personal and professional growth (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Even faculty and administrators who had little knowledge or understanding of service learning felt it offered connectedness and supported the relational aspect, a necessity in the health care professions.

The data revealed some resistance to using service learning on the part of a few faculty members and administrators. Lack of understanding of service learning and how it affects the curriculum supports Gray, Ondaatje, Fricker, & Geschwind’s (2000) contention that implementation cannot be successful without support.

Some faculty members appear to be working with service learning in distinct pockets rather than in system-wide collaboration. Ramaley (2000) suggests administrators find and enhance faculty groups already committed to service learning programs. This is unlikely to occur if the committee structure prevents the College Senate and the administration from knowing what the nursing faculty has already accomplished.
Although faculty and administrators acknowledge service learning supports the mission, some verbalize incorrect information related to the use of service learning. This further supports the notion of poor communication patterns. Jacoby (1996) would regard the nursing faculty as mentors to other faculty divisions but this role is unlikely to happen because this faculty group is leading the charge from the hierarchy’s bottom undetected and unsupported by the upper-level administration or other faculty. Driscoll and Sandmann (2004) suggests identifying and supporting faculty, who have worked quietly and without any formal support, reward, or recognition but whose work could inspire colleagues. They add, “academic administrators need to seek out those faculty and programs and learn from their successes and mistakes” (p. 56). Ramaley (2000) encourages administrators to seek out and care for faculty already committed to service learning programs. She urges investment of financial resources and building organizational infrastructures to support faculty’s work. Further study into communication patterns and how nursing faculty might spread the word across campus is essential. If citizenship and service are important to the institution, and faculty communicates to administration the value of service learning by “living the mission,” administration should support faculty who practice service learning though time and/or money compensation.

**Governance Structure**

The hierarchical nature of the governance structure defines, channels, and gives order to action events within the organization (Katz & Kahn, 1972). The structure can resist or filter the flow of important communication by changing, mixing, or sanitizing it. As per the governance structure at this institution, an idea or change would start at the task force level, continue up to the Curriculum Committee or Administrative Council, and if passed, head for the College Senate. In the case of service learning, nursing faculty as leaders appear to step outside the bounds of the established governance structure in order to initiate any changes in their curriculum. As the initiatives on behalf of service learning move up the governance hierarchy, service learning citations are recorded less frequently than in the nursing division documents. In fact, even if more college faculty members are introduced to the idea, less discussion takes place as it moves up the governance hierarchy. Despite the fact that much discussion is evidenced in the Service Learning Honors Program Task Force minutes, because the committee continues to be a task force rather than a standing committee after four years, it has minimal or no power in the governance hierarchy. Because much of the positional authority is vested at the top of the organizational hierarchy, more inquiry into why the administration marginalizes service learning as pedagogy when it flows from the mission is warranted (see also Furco & Holland, 2004). In this case, the nursing faculty used relational tactics to implement service learning and comply with the mission and their
curricular needs while positional authority appeared oblivious to their efforts (Dunlap, 1995).

**Communication**

The data reveal that the Division of Nursing and the Service Learning Honors Program at the college are leading the way in the institutionalization of service learning as pedagogy. Administrators offer only verbal support. The movement to institutionalize service learning is coming from the bottom of the hierarchy, rather than from the top down, what Greenleaf (1970, 1977) would label servant leadership. Serving first and leading second, servant leadership is not a foreign idea to the nursing profession (Dossey, Selanders, Beck & Atewell, 2005; Greenleaf, 1970, 1977). With its strong altruistic and ethical overtones, servant leadership has a strong connection to service learning and faith-based higher education institutions. Anatural marriage between the two would be expected.

Even though the governance structure inadvertently harbors communication barriers, the move to incorporate service learning into the curriculum proceeds from the nursing faculty and SLHP task force as unrecognized due to their location in the hierarchy. Nursing faculty use their position to redefine leadership and alter prevailing dynamics (Madden, 2002).

Nursing and SLHP discourse contrasts with administrative interviews and committee minutes which reveal poor communication between divisions as well as ambiguous communication between committees in the governance structure. Minutes show that committee members tend to discuss ideas but do not always know where to proceed. Some committees discuss service learning but never communicate minutes to other committees. Faculty and administration may need to examine the governance structure if service learning or any other major change is to be incorporated into the broader curricula. As indicated by Ward (1996), policy may need to be formulated in order to increase information exchange between committees, that is, between the top and the bottom of the governance structure. Further research is needed at the institution to determine why communication channels are unclear, obstructed, or nonexistent and how this can be remedied. Formulated and implemented policies may need to be revisited subsequently to monitor communication flow up, down, and across the governance hierarchy (see Furco & Holland, 2004).

**Administrative Support and Rewards**

Ward (1996), Gelmon et al (1998), Rubin (1996), and Driscoll and Sandmann (2004) agree that service learning may not be embraced by faculty in the absence of planning time, financial support, and rewards. In this case study, administration gave lip service to the need, however funds have only been budgeted for the SLHP task force, a body which includes representatives from across curricular divisions. Funds for faculty development system wide would be welcome but the lack of both communication and
faculty acceptance of service learning make that unlikely especially outside the nursing division.

Although there is a need to establish community partnerships to facilitate places for students to participate in service learning projects, no funding is allotted. As the largest division on campus, the nursing faculty makes those vital connections and maintains that collaborative spirit. Nursing education has the most research and literature on the incorporation and use of service learning in curricula (Reising, 2006). Nursing faculty is taking the lead to incorporate service learning into the curriculum while the second largest program, the physician assistant faculty makes little or no mention of service learning in their materials.

Even though all faculty divisions have representatives on the SLHP, inconsistency addressing service learning in the curriculum is present. This may be due to no faculty reward for participation on the SLHP Task Force as well as limited research on service learning in other health professions curricula. Faculty cannot implement a new teaching methodology they do not understand, have not been educated, or have had little exposure. The lack of communication and lack of understanding of service learning as pedagogy mentioned earlier may directly or indirectly link to the governance structure. Where service was clearly stated in the mission of a college, such as most faith-based institutions, service learning thrived (Rubin, 1996). Although positional leadership may give verbal support to service learning, Ward (1996) found that without leadership action, service learning initiatives floundered.

**Conclusion**

The nursing division and the SLHP are leading the way in institutionalizing service learning despite considerable obstacles in the governance structure at this faith-based institution. Because the governance structure stymies communication, a bottom to top approach to the institutionalization of service learning was in place. Nursing faculty communicate their support of the mission when they use service learning irrespective of tangible rewards Intrinsic motivation and a traditional devotion to service supports the implementation (Hamner, Wilder, Avery, & Byrd, 2002).

The data in this study show that administrative support is largely verbal, followed with minimal leadership action. Historically, the nursing profession supports and serves in order to improve peoples’ lives, therefore, servant leadership is not a foreign approach (Dossey, Selanders, Beck, & Atewell, 2005; Greenleaf, 1977). As the mission is the driving force for the college, a governance structure change may be the key to opening the door for the nursing faculty to lead by involving the whole institution in service learning by example.

Governance and communication channels appear to be barriers to institutionalization because the administration’s words and deeds are incongruent, while the nursing faculty’s espoused values and actual behav-
iors are congruent (Holland, 1997). However, much of the administrative incongruity could be addressed through recognizing, empowering, and utilizing the most knowledgeable proponents of service learning, the nursing faculty, even.

As a result of this study, the administration reviewed the findings and implemented changes. An administrative task force initiative to examine the current governance structure was assembled. A search process filled a newly created position in administration which shifts two of the three current administrators' duties. The administrator who currently supports service learning as pedagogy but requested more understanding of it will take on the responsibility of overseeing the SLHP and Curriculum Committee. Another administrator is currently team teaching a class in the honors program to experience service learning as pedagogy. The honors coordinator is currently visiting the freshman courses to introduce students to service learning as pedagogy. College marketing materials state that the college enhances learning through service learning opportunities.

This research study demonstrates leadership through data-driven conclusions that service learning as pedagogy, although supported by the college mission, struggled to exist due to poor communication and support across administrative and governance channels. The initiative to change emanated through bottom up servant leadership and subsequently has led the administration to recognize and take steps to remedy the situation. As the mission is the driving force of this faith-based institution, governance structure modification remains a key to opening the door not only for nursing to lead the college in service learning but also for everyone to address other issues that met with similar circumstances as they moved up the governance hierarchy. Greenleaf (1970) explained that it is often the situation and the community need that calls forth leadership, placing an ordinary person in the role of leader. In this instance, it draws attention to a malfunctioning governance structure and a persistent group of female faculty committed to seeing service learning as pedagogy fulfills the college mission.

References


